

CPN as the Registration Authority for Cultivars

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James Robinson's article on "Cultivar Naming and Registration" in CPN Vol. 8, p. 51 has prompted me to compile the following to emphasize my support of his idea.

It is very important to understand what a cultivar is, how it originates, how it is perpetuated, and why it is important to name and register them. The comments below have been simplified, from a somewhat complex body of information, to apply specifically to CP.

A cultivar (literally *cultivated variety*) is what we have for years referred to as a "variety" when referring to cultivated plants non-specialists will probably continue to call such plants "varieties," and this is all right as long as we realize that we are talking about *cultivated* varieties, not botanical or wild varieties.

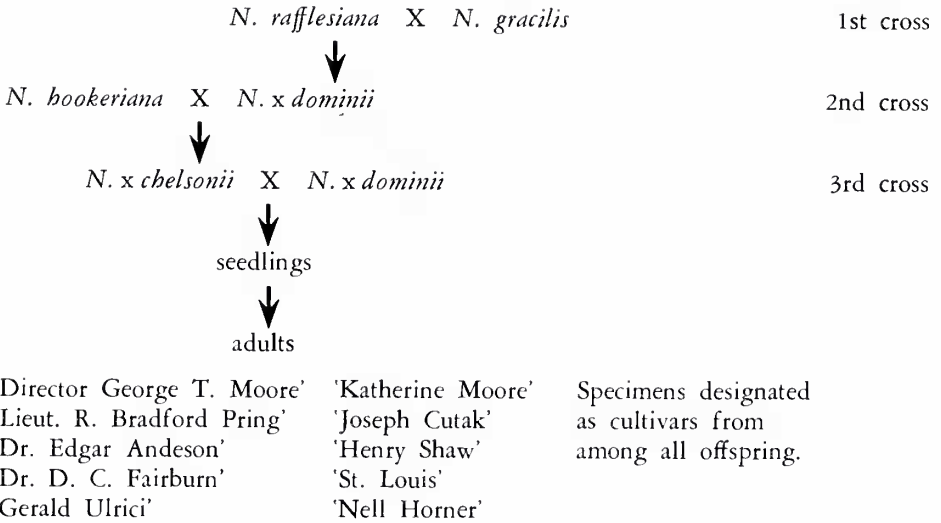
A cultivar is a named group of cultivated plants which are (1) very special and distinctive when compared to other members of the same species (of wild or cultivated plants) or hybrid group; (2) usually derived from a *single* selection of one plant from individuals of the same species or group of hybrid offspring; and (3) usually propagated by vegetative means, producing a clone, to maintain the desirable characteristics for which the cultivar was originally selected.

Cultivars do not exist as such in nature; they are created when man recognizes something distinctive and desirable in an individual specimen and "brings that specimen into cultivation to be preserved and perpetuated." Merely growing a "wild-collected" plant in a pot under cultivation does not make it a cultivar. Cultivar recognition occurs when a unique individual is selected from among many

which have been grown in cultivation for some time because it appears to be something out of the ordinary, something special, something better than the average member of that species or group. The early collectors of plants from unknown regions around the world were not selecting cultivars when they brought unusual new plants back to civilization; it was the nurserymen and gardeners who grew the plants and knew what was new and different who actually made cultivar selections.

Cultivars may also be selected from among the various seedlings resulting from a hybrid cross in cultivation. Most of our distinctive cultivars of ornamentals and crop plants are the result of hybridization and selection. Because of the variation in characteristics exhibited by wild and hybrid plants, it is very important that cultivars be propagated by vegetative means (except in the case of annuals) so that all individuals prepared for distribution will be identical to that first special selection. Only then can a plant be deserving of cultivar status. The fact that some types of plants are difficult to propagate vegetatively has been a deterrent to their producing significant numbers of cultivars.

To my knowledge there are no legitimately named cultivars among CP except *Nepenthes* hybrids made by the Japanese and the few *Nepenthes* hybrids made by George Pring prior to 1950 at the Missouri Botanical Gardens, most of the latter apparently having been lost from cultivation. The following is a chart showing the lineage of these American hybrids and how the cultivars were selected and named: (see Pring, G. H. Missouri Botanical Garden Bulletin, p. 31, 1950.):



If any of these cultivars could be shown to still exist, they could be registered since they were properly published (named and described) in 1950 [although they were not called “cultivars” at that time].

It is no simple matter to produce a cultivar, and such activity should not be taken lightly. The selection, whether of a species or hybrid, must be shown to be distinctive and worthy of recognition (at least in someone’s opinion); and it must be shown, over a period of time and over a range of conditions, that it is capable of maintaining its distinctive characteristics while being readily propagated. This all may take several years. One should not be discouraged, however, because there is no time like the present to begin — spectacular results may be obtained for the effort. One must be cautioned that it is very important to keep meticulous records of hybridizations, the parents involved, which seedlings are which, and as they grow up which ones seem to be the best. One should be careful not to glut the “market” (or other people’s collections) with poor quality plants or confusing and erroneously designated hybrids. Hybrids should not be allowed to breed uncontrolled with pure species, and then lose track of which is

which (this is most likely to occur, for example, with a large collection of *Sarracenia* growing outside together where cross-pollination is likely to occur). All plants must be scrupulously labeled; over the years it may take to develop a hybrid cultivar, one can forget which plant is which.

As Mr. Robinson pointed out, the naming of cultivars is governed by the International Code of Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants (1969). A cultivar is designated by a fancy name, in English (or other modern language, not Latin), attached to the generic name (e.g. *Rhododendron* ‘Roseum Elegans’), hybrid name (e.g. *Camellia x williamsii* ‘Donation’), or common name (e.g. Lilac ‘Mont Blanc’).

In order for a cultivar name to be legitimate, it must be in the proper form as described above and must be published in some printed form and distributed to the public, as in a journal like CPN or a dated seed catalog. In order to be valid this publication of the cultivar name must include a description (in any language), preferably an illustration, and a clear statement as to how this cultivar may be distinguished from related cultivars, species, or hybrids. The first validly publish-

ed name for a particular cultivar will be the correct one.

Registration of a cultivar name means that the name is accepted by a registration authority and included in a printed registry. CPN in this case would be the registration authority and would contain, periodically, a list of newly registered names (inclusion in the list constitutes registration). Registration is different from valid publication of a cultivar name. Publication can occur in any suitable periodical, catalog, or book; registration can occur only if the name is listed by the registration authority. The purpose of the registration authority is to provide one central clearing house through which all new cultivar names must pass so that everyone can know where to go and find such a listing of correctly named cultivars — it sort of makes the cultivar "officially" recognized.

The following are guidelines for the production of a list of cultivar names by a registration authority. Names submitted for registration should be accompanied by the following:

1. name of the cultivar
2. name and address of the originator of the cultivar
3. name of the describer or namer (if different from above) and full reference to the place and date of publication
4. information regarding the parentage, when known
5. information on the testing of the distinctiveness of the cultivar; that is, how does it differ from similar plants and does it faithfully maintain the distinction through propagation
6. awards received, with dates
7. a description (usually in English) including where possible, information on classification, details of color, shape, chromosome numbers, etc.
8. all known synonyms

For examples of long active Registration

Authorities, see the American Orchid Society Bulletin or the Bulletin of the American Rhododendron Society.

In particular, I would like to point out that the cultivars listed in Mr. Robinson's article, namely *Drosera capillaris* 'Gulf Coast Giant', *D. capillaris* 'Long Leaf', *S. purpurea venosa* 'Louis Burk', and *S. rubra* 'Gulf' have not been, to my knowledge, formally published with description, distinguishing characteristics, etc. I would be pleased to hear from anyone with evidence to the contrary. For example, no one specimen of *S. purpurea venosa* with pink flowers which occurs widely in the western Florida panhandle into Alabama has been singled out and propagated as an outstanding form and called 'Louis Burk.' When Wheery first saw it in cultivation in 1933 and called it "Horticultural Variety Louis Burk" it was thought to be very restricted and rare. Currently, the name 'Louis Burk' has no legal meaning whatsoever, horticulturally or botanically; this could easily be rectified, however, since the Code is lenient with regard to restrictions on names published before January 1, 1959.

In conclusion, CPN can become the medium for publication of new cultivars; and it can be designated as the appropriate Registration Authority for new cultivars. We welcome comments from readers expressing their views on these subjects.

For further information on cultivars and registration, obtain the following: International Code of Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants — 1969 (available from the American Horticultural Society, 2401 Calvert St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008; price about \$3.00)

Article: "The Concept of the Cultivar" (available from the author, Dr. James S. Pringle, Box 399, Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, Ontario L8N, 3H8, Canada)